INCLUSION AND THE ROLE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract: By the means of this case study we aimed to demonstrate how inclusion in general schools promotes the development of children with special needs. For this purpose a case of inclusion of a child with cerebral palsy in the general pre-school classroom, which implements the Step by Step program in Latvia, was investigated. The main concepts of the case study are 1) inclusive education and 2) parent involvement, where parent involvement is an indispensable component of inclusive education. Results of the case study are summarized in this article. Analysis of the experience testifies that participation in Step by Step Parent Education program helped parents to get free of stereotypes, and convinced them that inclusion in general schools is possible for their child with special needs. Parents’ active involvement in their children learning, which was stimulated by parent education program, promoted social, emotional and cognitive development of their child.

Keywords: inclusive education, children with special needs, inclusion, parent involvement

Introduction

In this study we aimed to demonstrate how to promote in students, as well as adults, the acceptance of diversity, which exists among human beings, and how to provide one of the basic human rights – equal access to qualitative education.

Lack of knowledge about people with special needs and lack of communication experience with them is the reason of intolerant attitude towards these people and ignorance of their human rights, what can be explained, firstly, by the lack of parent education, and secondly, by the decades long and still continuing practice of isolation of children with special needs in separate special schools. Bernard (2000) states that to overcome this practice the society needs to accept diversity in society and to respect equal rights of each individual:

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